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ABSTRACT

The majority of counselors are ill-equipped to respond to some of today's pertinent questions. The State of Maryland discovered in 1968 that there was no orderly or systematic provision of career guidance services. The formation of an Interdivisional Task Force on Career Development was approved and a Maryland Career Education Development Project design was funded. The State Board established career education as a major educational thrust. A series of national seminars in career education were held in 1972, followed by a local Governor's Conference and a State Professional Conference. Yet, two studies indicated the students had not experienced any measurable change in provision of services to meet their career development needs. It is apparent that without the help and involvement of institutions preparing counselors and teachers, State efforts would always be belated. The unique as well as the common competencies needed by counselors and teachers would have to be described and delivered during the preservice years. There has been some movement in this direction. (AG)

THE COUNSELOR AND CAREER EDUCATION;
A DEFENSE OF AND A CHALLENGE TO THE PROFESSION

by Nancy M. Pinson

Prologue

There is no counselor, and no teacher, who does not want students to be empowered as well as prepared, joyful as well as comfortable, aggressive as well as adaptable, and proud as well as competent. But, if we as educators cannot be described in these terms, we cannot presume to model and transmit these behaviors to students.

Rather than confront this fact about ourselves head-on, we have chosen to name the practicing counselor as that individual responsible for the inadequate to non-existent delivery of those services purporting to lead to the vocationally mature individual. While this correctly identifies one professional who must be involved, it also succeeds in obscuring our real focus: the breadth and characteristics of those services and our collective responsibility for their provision.

A teacher's task is to impart knowledge and skill while an administrator's task is to activate the best possible resources and climate for learning. These are relatively clearcut and measurable responsibilities. Conversely, the majority of counselors, trained to respond, probe, or reflect rather than to initiate, are ill-equipped to respond to questions like these: What is your plan for healthy as well as troubled students, for their teachers, and for those their lives will touch? Does it distinguish you and your competency from that of your colleagues - and does it validate your membership as a distinctive partner in the educational process?

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I must hope that in the citation of efforts made through one State Department of Education - a major point will be made. Those who prepare counselors are, in the last and first analysis, the individuals who can determine the goodness as well as the fit of the career development component of career education. State Departments can provide resources, conduct inservice for practitioners, and even provoke a cosmetic change through certification requirements - but without the sincere efforts of the training institutions the pool of conscientious, but incompletely prepared counselors can only grow larger.

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Not only have Maryland educators recognized that Career Education from pre kindergarten through adulthood has manifest potential for individuals of every physical, emotional, or economic disposition - they have come to see the conscious collaboration between adults as one of the most effective means of assessing the accountability of the entire educational process. As long ago as 1968, the State was discovering within its own boundaries - evidence comparable to that revealed by the soon to be published Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972* In Maryland, as well as nationally, students and educators reported that there was no orderly or systematic provision of career guidance services. In its absence, "help" was random and identified with peers, family and concerned relatives. Yet 84% of the national sample of more than 17,000 students felt that being successful in their chosen work was of great importance. This selection was made with a frequency second only to "getting belated (sic) help with the skills of science and mathematics."

*Pre-release summary: Guidepost, November, 1973

As a result of Maryland's 1968 Survey, the State Department approved the formation of the Interdivisional Task Force on Career Development in the same year. This multi-disciplined group was charged to assess existing resources, propose plans to augment and extend these, and to develop new and exemplary procedures to meet defined needs. Early in 1970, the Maryland Career Development Project design was approved and funded by the Commissioner's share of Part D monies. Its seven components were to impact upon a K-adult population through a television series, an information retrieval system, leadership training institutes, a resource notebook, a career development conference, and direct services to specified populations of Baltimore City elementary and junior high school students.

At the conclusion of the funding period of three years, each component had been absorbed and modified by the local system or state agency in which it had been located. It would be difficult to fairly assess the long range impact of each of these upon the state's philosophical and practical interpretation and implementation of Career Education without editorializing. Without question, however, the leadership training component is and continues to be the primary foundation for present and future efforts. (State funds supporting its continuance were utilized even before Federal Funds were exhausted - a clearcut demonstration of commitment and priority which enabled these institutes to reach personnel in 22 of 24 Maryland School districts.)

Moved by internal findings and national concern, the State Board acted in October of 1971 to establish Career Education as a major educational thrust. Prior to this, the State's Assistant Superintendent of Vocational-Technical Education, James L. Reid - was asked by the U.S. Office of Education to plan and assist with the conduct of a series of national seminars in Career Education given in various national regions through the Spring of 1972. These were

followed locally by a Governor's Conference and a State Professional Conference focused upon strategies for action research.

Throughout this vigorous, yet essentially formal activity, shirtsleeve workshops for counselors, teachers, school administrators and office level personnel continued. The team approach, first at the building level, and then at the office level, had become an established pattern - and those of us who were planning and conducting these institutes were willing to believe that enthusiasm, creativity, and involvement in the affected schools was in fact reaching the students. It is probably safe to say that in a majority of the elementary and middle schools, children were sensing a change in instructional patterns and activities. At the secondary level, however, where the need was most acute, two reports in combination indicated that these youngsters had not experienced any measurable change in the provision of services which would meet their career development needs.

Of these reports*: Goals and Needs of Maryland Public Education (known as the "Popular Report"), A Study of Career Guidance in Maryland, and a computerized profile of student needs in eleven districts administered by an outside agency - the first is worthy of brief summary here. This survey was administered to a large sample of parents, students, educators, and the community at large to determine public perception and expectations of its schools.

Six major concerns surfaced in the findings obtained:

1. Mastery of reading skills
2. Ability to arrive at independent decisions
3. Development of self respect
4. Ability to apply knowledge and skills to the solution of real life problems
5. Knowledge of the personal and social consequences of critical health problems, and
6. Skills required for employment in their selected occupations by students planning to enter the job market.

*Available upon request from Dr. James A. Sensenbaugh, State Superintendent of Schools, International Towers Building, Elkridge Landing Road, Baltimore, Maryland, 21240

It was and is overwhelmingly evident that each of these confronted Maryland education and educators with further documentation supporting needed change. At this point, the State appointed a committee to develop a five year plan for Career Education - a task completed and approved by the State Board in 1972.

Immediately thereafter, a Task Force was named and a chairman appointed who would activate the basically supportive functions described in the plan. While multiple sources of funding through legislation and existing state and vocational monies were researched, it was recognized that much of the present activity would continue to be dependent upon the in-kind human resource of Departmental personnel and the dedicated cadre of leadership developed in each local district.

It was clear to all of us that even with this dedication, we had to return again to that premise I spoke of earlier. Without the help and involvement of those institutions preparing counselors and teachers, our own efforts would always be post facto rather than de jure. Two events, conducted through Towson State College and supported by ancillary funds provided by the Division of Vocational Education, attempted to address this need through honest debate with counselor and teacher educators from every four year institution across the state. Rather than impose our own strong beliefs upon our colleagues, we were able to stand back and learn from Tom Green of Syracuse, Louise Keller of Colorado, Rupert Evans of Illinois, Ed Herr of Pennsylvania, and James Jackson of Appalachian State. (Our own Ken Hoyt - aware of his closeness to us - was a major but silent support!) Each of these individuals spoke from the context of his or her own beliefs of the merits and the hazards of effective or mismanaged career education. Yet, it is worthy of note that during these debates (and reflected in the subsequent recommendations and strategies developed by the participant group)

no single presentation had a more dramatic effect than that which was conveyed by district level personnel. These Directors of Guidance, Curriculum, and Career Education - in essence those who have the ability and the power to describe and hire graduating practitioners - looked our professors in the eye and announced,

"You are not giving us the kinds of people
we need to work in today's schools!"

If one single result of these seminars could be identified it would be our belated recognition that the unique as well as the common competencies needed by the counselors and teachers would have to be described and delivered during the preservice years - even as they are provided to practitioners in the field.

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Because this address was to be a challenge to - as well as a defense of - the counseling profession, it is rewarding to note that in the interim of four months preceding this convention, counselors from seven of Maryland's districts have participated in intensive residential career guidance workshops through the leadership of the Pupil Services Section of the State's Division of Instruction. These practicing counselors assisted in the planning and conduct of experiences which would provide skills they recognized as vitally important. in their own responses to the Career Development needs of their students. We are also receiving expert assistance from Ken Hoyt and others in the defining of twenty basic competencies which can be taught, measured, and replicated in both inservice and preservice programs. In addition, self-administered check lists which can be employed by practicing counselors, teachers, and curriculum developers are under construction. These would "flag" critical evidences of career guidance and career education in text, guide and behavior.

In conclusion, I'd like to emphasize six major points* made at a similar conference in West Virginia last summer as we confronted the reality of Career Education and the counselor.

1. We must identify, create, and implement good career education just as forcefully as we have been criticizing poor imitations of it - these latter do and will exist.
2. We must be involved with its appearance in our own work settings not because it is popular, political, and accountable - and it is those things, but because it gives us one hundred new ways to help kids (and most of those "ways" are people neither we nor the kids have ever had a chance to know!)
3. We must keep raising the question of human options, alternatives, life styles and learning styles and insist that they, not our servant: technology, are the determinants of the future occupational society.
4. We must interpret career clusters as families of preferred work attack and resolution behaviors built around the skills the individual has and/or wants to develop and use - rather than around the industries, occupations, or the specific skills that employers are alleged to want in 1973. Moreover, we must convince that present and future employing society of the superiority of this approach by bringing to them these individuals who will improve as well as dignify the nature of work itself.
5. We must provide continuing student and faculty access to the worker, not only at his workplace, but in his family setting - at rest and at play. For if our "forecast" of work is to have any validity at all, it cannot exclude the discovery that many of today's working adults admit to little or no control over the direction their careers have taken...that too many work so that they might stop working, that too few have invested their work with love - and we must ponder these things.
6. We must be willing to put away for good our absorption with role and function, our task avoidance debates on the merits of the behavioral as opposed to the therapeutic model and look instead at the individuals in front of us to whom we can bring the insights of these and other humanistic approaches - ergo: we must become aggressive and optimistic about ourselves as well as our knowledges!

*Presentation made to elementary school counselors in Charleston, W. Va. August 31, 1973, West Virginia Personnel and Guidance Association's Annual Conference.

I think we have the skills to respond to these six obligations. What remains, then, is the establishment of a counseling posture in career education which embraces not only our historical, yet essentially reactive, concern with the individual's career development; that is - his internal synthesis of, and response to, the "effects" of career education of any kind --

but our provision of creative leadership in its design, implementation, and evaluation. I am convinced that through this posture counselors will be able to extend, publicize, and render indispensable the unique mobility and competency which is theirs to command.